



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/commemorating-150th-anniversary-founding-land-grant-university-system-and-us-department>

Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the Land-Grant University System and the U.S. Department of Agriculture



Lance Cheung/USDA

Smithsonian Institution's Stephen Kidd guides USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack through the People's Garden display and talks about the various aspects of Campus and Community themed section of the 2012 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, in Washington, DC.

This year at the annual [Smithsonian Folklife Festival](#), which takes place June 27-July 1 and July 4-8, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Land-Grant University System are celebrating their partnership and 150-year anniversaries. One of the festival programs is: "Campus and Community: Public and Land-Grant Universities and USDA at 150." This Festival program will bring the partnership to life for visitors through demonstrations, discussions, and hands-on activities.

The festival celebrates the 150th anniversary of the creation of the USDA and the land-grant university system via the [Morrill Act](#). The Morrill Act, enacted in 1862 by President [Abraham Lincoln](#), provided for grants of federal land to states willing to establish a public university with a focus on agriculture. The purpose of the land-grant university system was to teach agriculture, military tactics, and mechanic arts in addition to classical studies.

A Second Morrill Act of 1890 added [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#) to the land-grant university system, followed by the addition of the Native American tribal colleges and Hispanic Serving Institutions in 1994. At the festival, 28 of the 105 Land Grant Universities will be featured with booths and various activities.

Land-grant universities play a significant role in preparing for our future. The [land-grant university system has been such a success](#) in the United States that countries around the world, including those in Africa, have expressed interest in creating their own land-grant university systems. The role of land-grant universities will be even more crucial as our world prepares to feed more than 9 billion people in the coming years by conserving water, creating resilient crops and farming

systems, and finding alternative energy sources.

The agricultural research and development conducted at these universities help to create worldwide solutions for some of the biggest contributors to food insecurity. Research at these universities [all across the United States](#) help to feed the world through the development of new drought resistant strains of rice, high yield wheat crops, disease resistant maize, and much more!

USDA supports land-grant universities and the [Cooperative Extension System](#) through the [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) by providing funding and identifying current issues and problems for the universities to focus research and education. These universities are leading our future with innovative agricultural research, new approaches to undergraduate and graduate education, and life-long learning.